

I just don't think I'm prepared to do it now. And I'll be ready tomorrow. I'll ask someone, and you can ask me tomorrow.

### **Middle East Peace Process**

**Q.** Mr. President, what about the Middle East peace process? Is it going to take—Hanukkah celebrates—is a celebration of miracles—what is it going to take to rekindle the Middle East peace process?

**The President.** Well, I'm actually quite hopeful. I think, first it takes a reaffirmation to the process of peace, which means that there should be a high level of security associated with the process itself. And I think there's general belief that the Palestinian Authority has redoubled its efforts on security. The Israeli Cabinet has seemed to adopt the position that said that they would be for another withdrawal consistent with the Oslo accords. There appears to be other discussion in Israel over the questions, the long-delayed questions about the airport and the port and the safe transit from the West Bank to Gaza.

So I'm actually quite hopeful that in the coming year we'll have progress not only between the Israelis and Palestinians but also between Israel and Syria. I think the openness is there, and I think that many people are sobered by the consequences of the absence of a viable peace process. So maybe it's just the holiday season, but I'm feeling pretty upbeat about it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:25 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayrim Baram, an Israeli whose son died in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, his surviving son, Amatzia Baram, and his daughter-in-law, Bonnie Baram-Belkin; Susan Koss, director, and Danny Lew, student, Jewish Primary Day School of the Adas Israel Synagogue; and U.S. District Judge Royce C. Lamberth.

### **Statement on the Death of Sebastian Arcos Bergnes**

*December 23, 1997*

Hillary and I were saddened to learn of the death of Sebastian Arcos Bergnes, a courageous and tireless activist for human rights, democracy, and freedom in Cuba.

Mr. Arcos dedicated his life to peaceful change in his beloved homeland. He was a

man of honor and dignity who commanded enormous respect around the world for the sacrifices he made and the good work he did for the people of Cuba. As one of the founders of the human rights movement in Cuba, he blazed a trail which has inspired many others who cherish individual liberties. He was an example to us all and will be missed.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his son and daughter and the rest of the family who will carry on the effort to secure human rights in Cuba.

### **Statement on the Oklahoma City Bombing Trials**

*December 23, 1997*

Two years ago, I told the families of the 168 innocent men, women, and children who perished in the Murrah Federal Building that they had lost too much, but they had not lost America, and that we would stand by them for as long as it took.

The dedicated team of prosecutors and investigators who brought these cases to a successful conclusion have helped to fulfill that promise. The Nation is deeply in their debt.

I know that no verdict in a court of law can ease the loss of a loved one. But the successful prosecution of Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols should offer a measure of comfort that all Americans stand with the families of Oklahoma City.

### **Statement on Deferred Enforced Departure for Haitians**

*December 23, 1997*

Today I have directed the Attorney General and the Immigration and Naturalization Service to defer for one year the deportation of Haitians who were paroled into the United States or applied for asylum prior to December 31, 1995. This action implements the commitment I made to address the situation of Haitians when I signed immigration legislation last month offering relief to Central Americans and others. It will shield these Haitians from deportation while we work with Congress to provide them long-term legislative relief.

Haitians deserve the same treatment we sought for Central Americans. Like Central Americans, Haitians for many years were forced to seek the protection of the United States because of oppression, human rights abuses, and civil strife at home. Many of them have established strong ties and made significant contributions to our communities. And, while we have been encouraged by Haiti's progress following the restoration of democratic government in 1994, the situation there remains fragile. Staying the deportation of these Haitians and obtaining for them permanent legislative relief will help support a stable and democratic Haiti—which, in turn, is the best safeguard against a renewed flow of Haitian migrants to the United States.

### **Memorandum on Deferred Enforced Departure for Haitians**

*December 23, 1997*

*Memorandum for the Attorney General*

*Subject:* Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Haitians

Over the past several decades, many Haitians have been forced to flee their country because of human rights abuses and civil strife and have sought the protection of the United States. A significant number of these Haitians were brought into the United States from Guantanamo Bay Naval Base by President Bush following the overthrow of President Aristide in 1991. Other Haitians arrived here through other means and were paroled or applied for asylum. Many of these Haitians continue to be without legal status in the United States.

Pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States, I have determined that it is in the foreign policy interest of the United States to defer for 1 year the deportation of any Haitian national who was paroled into the United States before December 31, 1995, or who filed for asylum before December 31, 1995, and who has been continuously present in the United States since that date.

Accordingly, I now direct you to take the necessary steps to implement for these Haitians:

1. deferral of enforced departure from the United States for 1 year from the date of this memorandum; and
2. authorization for employment for 1 year from the date of this memorandum.

This directive shall not apply to any Haitian national: (1) who has been convicted of an aggravated felony; (2) who is found to be a persecutor of others within the meaning of 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(42); (3) whose removal you determine is in the interest of the United States; (4) whose presence or activities in the United States the Secretary of State has reasonable ground to believe would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States; (5) who voluntarily returned or returns to Haiti or his or her country of last habitual residence outside the United States; (6) who was deported, excluded, or removed prior to the date of this memorandum; or (7) who is subject to extradition.

These measures shall be taken as of the date of this memorandum.

**William J. Clinton**

### **Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the Comprehensive Trade and Development Policy for Africa**

*December 23, 1997*

*Dear Mr. \_\_\_\_\_:*

I am pleased to submit the third of five annual reports on the Administration's Comprehensive Trade and Development Policy for Africa as required by section 134 of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act. This year marks a watershed in our economic and trade relations with the countries of Africa.

On June 17, I announced a new strategy to promote economic growth and opportunity in Africa. The Partnership for Growth and Opportunity in Africa opens the door to real, positive change, as only nations carrying out serious reforms will reap the full benefits. Those that strengthen their democracies, reform their trade regimes, and invest in their people will see their efforts pay off in increased trade that will create new jobs, increase wages, spur growth, and improve the